

"ACADEMICUS ABSURDUM" (AN APPRAISAL OF THE HAZARDS AND ERRORS OF AN ABSTRACT ACADEMIC APPROACH WHICH IS COMMON IN ATTEMPTS TO COPE WITH CURRENT MAJOR SOCIAL CRISES)

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THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY—PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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THE PARALLEL INSTITUTIONS OF THE POVERTY ACT: EVALUATING THEIR EFFECTS ON UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS AND ON EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

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Impact of Changing Sex Mores

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SEXUAL DECISION-MAKING

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This study has explored the gamut of sexual decision-making engaged in by 131 single, college-level males, ages 20–24. The data obtained make it clear that studies which report only tabulations indicating the numbers who have had or have not had intercourse fall short of revealing the full extent of sexual decision-making which occurs.

The 131 subjects reported sexual decision-making as follows:

- (a) 59 individuals (45 per cent) reported intercourse with a total of 210 different females.
- (b) 55 individuals (42 per cent) reported a total of 93 decisions in which they rejected intercourse.
- (c) 59 individuals (45 per cent) reported a total of 146 decisions in which the female rejected their attempts to secure intercourse.
- (d) 73 individuals (57 per cent) reported a total of 111 mutual agreements made in association with a female to reject intercourse. .
- (e) 17 individuals (13 per cent) reported that they had never been in a situation in which any kind of a decision had been required. That is they had never had the occasion to make any of the decisions mentioned above.

In order to compare the significance of certain factors, the twenty sexually least-active subjects were compared with the twenty sexually most-active subjects. Placement of individuals was determined by a formula taking into account the number of partners in intercourse, and the number of rejections in which the individuals had been involved.

When this was done the following differences were found:

- (a) The members of the most-active group started dating on the average at age 14, and had friends who were, for the most part, sexually experienced. Their families had an average annual income of \$9,500. The satisfaction scores of these subjects on a self-concept inventory was somewhat higher than the score for the least active group. This group was also less devout religiously.
- (b) The members of the least-active group started dating on the average at age 16. Most of their friends were, like themselves, sexually inexperienced, and their families had average annual incomes of \$8,000.

The group was also divided by religious devoutness into two parts, the least-devout and most-devout halves. More reasons were given on the average, for the rejection of possible intercourse by the more devout group, and more of them were moral reasons, than was the case with members of the most-active group. The latter sought intercourse earlier time-wise, and at a lower level of emotional involvement in the dating relationship, and reported fewer mutual decisions to avoid intercourse.

Interviews were held relative to reasons for the decisions made, and aspects of decision-making. In the interviews the subjects ordinarily discussed their decisions in terms of the situations facing them at the moment. Yet it became clear that for many, decisions were made long before they faced immediate circumstances. Conversely it became clear that immediate circumstances could upset long-standing opinions as to what would be done in a given situation.

Many of those who were sexually inexperienced expressed dissatisfaction with their virginal state. They felt uneasy and depreciated among experienced boys, and felt that adults who should have supported them and appreciated them were entirely unaware of the sexual choices they had made.

THE CHRONIC REVOLUTION

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No one denies that there is such a thing as revolution, and that it can be sudden, acute and devastating in its effects. But there is also such a thing as evolution, and sometimes the two are confused. This seems to be the case, for example, with the much-publicized "trend toward young marriages." And it seems also to be the case with births out of wedlock.

Taken out of context, the figures on births out of wedlock appear to represent a revolution in sex behavior. But when viewed in context, the recent "alarming rise" appears as a continuation of a gradual, long-term trend, and there are indi-

cations that the rise may be leveling off. For those who are not statisticians, context and perspective can be gained better through very simple visual presentation than through tabulated figures. A few simple charts, for example, bring out some fallacies about illegitimacy ratios and about teenage illegitimacy.

Among the reasons for the confounding of evolution and revolution are changes in the composition of the population and, above all, in its size. By any name, the number of births out of wedlock has increased greatly with consequent demands for more, better and different services. Some of the facts about availability and use of services for unmarried mothers and their children are painful: for example, the fact that the majority of children born out of wedlock are nonwhite and that, nevertheless, about three-quarters of the services expressly designed for unmarried mothers go to white girls and women. Yet there is a renewed determination to expand and improve services. Moreover, some current demonstrations now in process or about to be launched, open up the way for promising innovations.

Services for unmarried mothers and their children can give needed help but will not, of course, reduce illegitimacy rates or the problems they breed. Those rates and problems are unlikely to be controlled solely by the efforts of health and welfare agencies or by services that begin only after a girl has become pregnant out of wedlock. It may be, however, that broader forces represented in the evolution now taking place will diminish either the rates or the problems and possibly both.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF INDUCED ABORTION

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Abortion whether induced or spontaneous is one of the possible reactions to pregnancy. There is some indication that abortion as an alternative to pregnancy is being chosen more frequently now than before. This seems to be related to the social view that increasingly respects woman's right to direct the course of her life, including the possibility of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. Another factor is that abortion has become easier to get.

This study examines the significance and consequence of abortion of a first pregnancy in the lives of eight women who came for psychoanalytic treatment. They ranged in age from 19 to 54. Three were unmarried, one had an "illegitimate" child, four were married and with child and one was a widow of 54 with many abortions and no children.

In two instances the reason for referral related directly to the abortion. One woman was referred following a possible suicide attempt on the first anniversary of her abortion. One young woman of 20 was sent by her mother for therapy following an abortion. For the other six the significance of this act became apparent in the course of therapy.

In all instances abortion had a significant, negative impact but this varied with such factors as the meaning of the pregnancy, whether the abortion was based on

a voluntary decision made collaboratively with the husband or lover, by the woman herself or by the parents, and the degree of fulfillment of the postabortion life experience.

Some of the specific findings were:

1. Initially all women underwent a negative change in their body image with a view of experiencing themselves as destroyed, crippled or severely damaged. There was a variety of reparative attitudes which developed from this. These attitudes affected their feelings of competence in work, range of interests and relationships. In two instances where subsequent children were born with congenital defects, severe problems were reinstated.
2. There was a tendency to view one's self as less feminine, maternal and adult and more neuter, masculine and dependent.
3. There was an increased sense of isolation or defensive sociability or promiscuity based on a sense of unworthiness, guilt and a search for both reparative and self-punitive experiences.
4. All women in this group completed the pregnancy in fantasy with varying degrees of elaboration of fantasy about the sex and characteristics of the child and its place in the family. There was a development of anniversaries of birthdays and abortion day with a proneness to depression in this period. In most instances there was no awareness that the depression referred to the anniversary although it was portrayed, very graphically sometimes in dreams and fantasies.
5. In addition to whatever reality factors were present in the decision to have the abortion there were always in this group factors relating to doubts and fears of the adequacy of the woman for mothering, fear of identification with her own mother, hatred and distrust of the man, and the father. These were highly complexly patterned referents.
6. In at least two instances the consequences of the abortion were essentially progressive for the woman's growth in the sense of articulating previously ambiguous and incoherent conflicts and creating "identity crises" which were meaningful.

A PROJECT FOR UNWED PREGNANT ADOLESCENTS IN CHICAGO

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The purpose is to establish a therapeutic daytime environment for unwed adolescent girls who remain in their own homes during pregnancy; to investigate what is required in the way of education, medical, nursing, psychiatric and social service for a successful experience which will carry over after the baby is born; to explore those techniques which seem best suited for meeting the unwed pregnant adolescent's needs in a comprehensive community program; to investigate the social, emotional and cultural factors which may have either a positive or negative influence on long-term results and to explore ways of dealing with these influences.

All girls who become pregnant while at elementary school will be referred and

may make their own decisions with regard to attendance. The group of girls in the special program will be limited to 15 at any one time. About 40 girls a year will be served and the average length of time in the program is estimated at three to five months. The core of the project will be a school program to which the girls can be transferred as soon as they are referred from the regular schools. Hours will be standard school hours, five days a week. Time for prenatal clinic visits, individual testing and counseling and other special services will be included in these hours. Instruction will be highly individualized and geared to the students' interest, aptitudes, levels of achievement, abilities and practical needs. The school program will be considered an extension of Doolittle Elementary School. Credits will be transferred when the girl returns to regular school. Included in a diagnostic evaluation will be psychological testing using both projective and objective tests and psychiatric evaluation through psychiatric interviews and social study. There will be interviews with key family members and when possible with the putative father.

Social data include developmental history of girl and background information about her family (social, economic, cultural), circumstances leading to pregnancy, community and family attitudes toward the girl's pregnancy and family inter-relationships and a description of the current situation (living arrangements, economic status). Psychiatric data include level of ego integration, reaction to the stress situation and ability to cope with stress and level of maturation.

Role of Behavioral and Social Scientists in Social Change

Chairman: Leon Eisenberg

NEEDED SOCIAL SCIENCE SKILLS IN MASS MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

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THE PROCESS OF UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL RESEARCH TO IMPROVE SOCIAL PRACTICE

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Our work in this new center at the University of Michigan is attempting to gain perspective on the process of the use of science by comparative analysis of the science utilization process in various fields of application of physical, biological and social science resources. Our staff is made up of project teams with a mixture of research and practice skills. A review of our current projects in the specific areas of family life, education, delinquency, and community development indicate the following types of functions of scientists as problem-solving resources—

1. The *retrieval and organization of knowledge* related to some particular problem situation or program development need.